

Local Expectations and Readiness for Pandemic Flu

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Overview

- Background
 - Local considerations
- Challenge
 - Between complacency and panic
- Example
 - Baltimore, Maryland

Local Level

- A crisis a day
 - Violence
 - Infectious disease
 - Environmental health
 - Constituent issues
- Consequence: even harder to sustain attention than at national level

Local Level

- Very high expectations
 - Katrina: total city evacuation
 - Anthrax: 48 hour Rx of entire population
 - Pandemic flu: substantial surge capacity
- Consequence: competition even among very ambitious goals

Local Level

- Many involved parties
 - Multiple agencies
 - Hospitals
 - Community associations
 - Business interests
 - [Many of above have lawyers]
- Consequence: easy to get people to talk about an issue, but can be difficult to solve problems...few resources available

Challenge: Between Complacency and Panic

- Most common questions:
 - Baltimore is ready, right?
 - We'll all be overwhelmed, right?
- Danger #1: Unrealistic expectations for how city will cope with pandemic
- Danger #2: Greatest fear is fear itself

Responding to Questions

- For question 1:
 - Not just about city response
 - Mask ordinance in SF 1918
 - Challenge to all aspects of city life
- For question 2:
 - Worst case scenario not most likely
 - Goal is to keep city going
 - We're in this together
- For both: You should get involved

Preparedness in Baltimore

- Citizen
- Government & Private Sector
- Hospitals
- Public health

Citizen: B'More Prepared

- Goal: To ensure that Baltimore City communities are equipped with the tools to prepare themselves and their families during an emergency.
- Attendees are provided with tools, reminder cards, and practical exercises to as well as assistance in creating a written personal preparedness plan for both home and work settings that answers the following questions:
 - How would you keep in contact with your family if separated during an emergency?
 - Where would you and your family go if you had to leave your home?
 - Who would take care of your children, elderly parents or pets should you have to shelter-in-place at work?

Government: Planning

- Major commitment in Baltimore
 - Katrina, Interoperable communications, OEM
- Interagency process
 - COOP
 - Legal
 - HR: city employees
 - Businesses
 - Defining key decisionmaking groups—will involve public

Hospitals: Coordination

- National leaders
- Still need to coordinate, e.g.
 - Triage
 - Communication
 - EMS
- All will have significant public education component

Public Health

- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Example: ICS
- Example: Surveillance
- Example: Communications
- Strategy: build these capacities around the Health Department using regular public health activities

RAND: Prepare Project

- Quality improvement in preparedness response
- Set goal, find something in health department for test
- Our goal: public communication
- Test with new immunization requirements
- Radio, bus shelter, school-based communications
- Met annual goal within 8 weeks
- Establishing new mechanisms of communication within health department

Conclusions

- Many challenges at local level
- What national policymakers can do:
 - Technical assistance
 - Help set realistic expectations, both now and during an emergency
 - Resources

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